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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002446

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TALABANI AGGRIEVED WITH JAFARI EVEN AS HE MAKES
STRONG EFFORT ON SUNNI OUTREACH

REF: A) BAGHDAD 2427 B) 2436

Classified By: Classified by James F. Jeffrey, Charge d'Affaires, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: President Talabani told Charge in a June 8 meeting that Prime Minister Jafari is carrying out his office unilaterally and marginalizing Kurdish officials. Talabani said he planned to meet Jafari and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) leader Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim that night to complain over issues ranging from slights over property and ethnocentric speeches to destabilizing moves that have blocked money allotted to Kirkuk and disempowered Kurdish cabinet officials. Talabani said his relationship with Mas'ud Barzani is excellent and both men are working together in an outreach to Turkmen leaders in Kirkuk. Talabani said he supported adding 25 Sunni Arabs to the constitution drafting committee. He agreed with the Charge's call for serious Sunni Arab inclusion and promised to work with MNF-I in resolving security problems in the insurgency-plagued city of Hawija. End Summary.

An Internal Iraqi Summit Set for Tonight

2. (C) President Talabani told Charge and DCM in a June 8 meeting that he was attending an internal Iraqi summit that night to discuss a host of accumulating disputes over government power sharing, Kirkuk, and Sunni Arab inclusion in the TNA Constitution Drafting Committee. The meeting will bring together Talabani, Prime Minister Jafari, Vice President Adil Abd al-Mehdi and SCIRI leader Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim is hosting. Talabani said that he considered this group to be the key leadership committee in Iraq. Hakim, he pointed out, only allowed Jafari to take the Prime Ministership in exchange for being considered the "political authority" (marja) of the Shia coalition.

Concern Over Jafari's Expanding Power

3. (C) Talabani told the Charge that he is increasingly concerned that Prime Minister Jafari is acting beyond his legal authorities in running the state. The key difference in their views, Talabani made clear, lies in their definition of Iraq's "government." Jafari seems to think he possesses unilateral executive authority, Talabani said, but TAL Article 24 defines the "Iraqi Transitional Government" as consisting of the National Assembly, Presidency Council and Council of Ministers.

4. (C) Talabani said this article leads to the conclusion that "there must be agreement between the two lists (Kurdish and Shia) about everything." Talabani proceeded to lay out Kurdish grievances in detail. (Note: The points echoed those found in a blunt and angry letter Talabani recently wrote to Jafari, a copy of which was passed to Charge on June 7 by Deputy Prime Minister Rowsch Shaways (REFTEL B). End Note)

5. (C) The following were the key grievances:

-- OBJECTING TO LAITH KUBBA'S APPOINTMENT: Talabani said that Jafari acted illegally in unilaterally selecting Laith Kubba as the government's spokesman. Charge replied that he understood Kubba to be Jafari's personal spokesman. Talabani shot back that Kubba is acting with the authority of a Deputy Minister, a position that must be approved by the cabinet and ratified by the Presidency Council. (NOTE: Talabani's letter denounces Kubba for his allegedly "chauvinistic and antagonistic position towards federalism as well as his provocative statements in America against the rights of the Kurdish people..." END NOTE)

-- FREEZING DPM SHAWAYS OUT OF KEY COMMITTEES: Talabani said Jafari has frozen his deputy prime ministers out of power, relegating them to little more than "ministers of state." Jafari's has created nine ministerial committees directly reportable to him, Talabani complained, subsuming portfolios the deputies should handle. (NOTE: The letter refers to this insult to Rowsch Shaways as "an aggression on the rights of the representatives of the Kurdish people and national

consensus." END NOTE)

-- UNACCOUNTABLE BUDGET EXPENDITURES: Talabani said that Jafari has spent some \$38 million since coming to office without giving the Presidency Council any idea where the money has gone. (NOTE: In previous meetings with Emboffs, Talabani has accused ex-President Ghazi al-Yawar of the same, threatening to order audits by the Public Integrity Commission. END NOTE)

-- BARHAM SALIH DISEMPOWERED: Talabani complained that Jafari had robbed Planning Minister Barham Salih of real authority. (NOTE: His letter angrily describes Jafari of "usurping" Salih's "rights" in violation of a side agreement made on the day the government was formed. END NOTE)

-- UNDOING KIRKUK AGREEMENT: Talabani said that Jafari has undone a major achievement of the Allawi government in blocking an agreement to provide \$125 million in funding to the Iraqi Property Claims Commission and the so-called Article 58 Committee, which would help resolve the Kirkuk situation. \$25 million had been disbursed by the time Jafari took office, Talabani said, and Jafari has blocked the disbursement of the remaining \$100 million to the two entities.

-- BADGERING KURDS AND BILKING THE PRESIDENCY: Talabani said the Jafari government has inappropriately badgered former National Council Speaker (and PUK leader) Fuad Ma'asum for the return of his armored car. Ma'asum still needs the vehicle and is a key TNA official, Talabani pointed out. More seriously, Talabani said, the Jafari cabinet has confiscated significant holdings from the presidency office without accounting for them. Talabani said that 19 cars have been taken from him and 140 are registered to his office with no record of where they are. Furthermore, the presidency has control over 12 houses but Talabani does not know where they are and has no house of his own. (COMMENT: These irregularities may be the responsibility of former President Ghazi al-Yawar, not Jafari. END COMMENT)

Progress on Sunni and Kirkuk Outreach

16. (C) Once he moved off of Kurdish grievances with Jafari, Talabani's mood brightened and he laid out progress on several fronts:

-- STRONG SUNNI ARAB PRESENCE FOR CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE: Talabani said he had met with several Sunni Arab leaders and supported the addition of 25 Sunni Arab members to the Constitution Drafting Committee. Talabani said he expected them to act as "equal members" while respecting that the ultimate product of the committee would pass through the National Assembly for approval. He expected Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim to agree to this formulation, which brings the committee up to 80 members. The issue would be finalized in 2-3 days, he said.

-- SOLID RELATIONS WITH BARZANI: Talabani said his relationship with Barzani is excellent. He encouraged the DCM to go forward with a planned trip to meet Barzani in the north in the coming days. Talabani said that Barzani had attended on invitation the recent 13th PUK anniversary celebration in Dokan, a major statement of unity. The KRG has officially begun its work with the successful election of a speaker for the assembly and a cabinet. "All problems have been solved," Talabani said.

-- IMPROVING RELATIONS IN KIRKUK: Talabani said he believed Iraq faced a "golden opportunity" to solve the problems of Kirkuk and was arguing this to Barzani as well. Talabani said he had personally received Faruq Abdallah, head of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, and reached agreement that the Turkmen deserve a role in the administration of Kirkuk. Talabani said he had convinced Barzani to join him in working with the Front. Talabani added that he considered the Turkish government's attitude in the area improved.

-- TROUBLE IN HAWIJA: Talabani agreed with Charge that the city of Hawija south of Kirkuk is seeing problematic insurgent activity, particularly from the Ansar al-Sunna. Talabani said he believed the group was exploiting Arab concerns in the province over Kurdish influence. The key will be improving the relationships in the area. "We must convince the Arabs to live with us," he said. "Hawija has always had strong cells of Syrian Ba'athists and Saddam's Ba'athists." Talabani was concerned that Iraqi and U.S. forces better coordinate arrest and detention efforts in the area, he said.

Looking Forward to New Ambassador

17. (C) Talabani was aware of Ambassador Khalilzad's SFRC hearing and said he looked forward to his arrival. Talabani

agreed when Charge urged him to continue his positive work on Sunni Arab inclusion in the Constitution Committee. Talabani also agreed with Charge that a stronger dialogue with Jafari was needed to resolve the disputes he laid out.

COMMENT: Iraq's Embattled Executive

18. (C) COMMENT: As with Shaways and in DCM's meetings with FM Zebari and Finance Minister Allawi, we urged Talabani to pursue constant, non-confrontational dialogue on this and to make haste in the process of adding Sunni Arabs to the constitution drafting committee. Those are the paths to resolving these disputes and these leaders appear to be heading down them. The internal summit Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim is hosting is the right forum for these men to hash out power sharing on the ground. And the constitution committee, now poised to include a large delegation of Sunni Arabs, is the right forum for them to enshrine power sharing in the law.
END COMMENT.

19. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.
Jeffrey